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Summer 2008

Silverwire Newsletter

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Silverwire

Vol. 6, No. 1 Summer 2008

NEWSLETTER OF THE UMAINE CENTER ON AGING

Center and Partners Kick off Safe Medicine Disposal for ME Program

The first-in-the-nation statewide pharmaceuticals mail-back program launched this summer by the University of Maine's Center on Aging in conjunction with the Maine Benzodiazepine Study Group and 18 other partners is being heralded as an early success.

In the first phase of the program, 1,800 self-addressed drug mail-back envelopes are being distributed to older adults and their caregivers at 11 pharmacies in Penobscot, Kennebec, Cumberland and Aroostook counties. These envelopes are used to mail unused and unwanted medications to the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency for proper disposal. As phase 2 of the program gets under way this fall, 7,200 more envelopes will be distributed to many more participating pharmacies throughout Maine.

In the planning stages for several years, the Center received a \$150,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency a year ago to launch the project, which was created help keep tons

of medications out of rivers, streams and groundwater.

Kathy Sykes, Senior Advisor at the U. S. EPA's Aging Initiative, says she considers the Safe Medicine Disposal for ME project "a cutting-edge initiative addressing in very practical ways an issue of critical importance to individuals of all ages."

The pharmaceuticals mail-back program is considered important by healthcare professionals, law enforcement, environmentalists and others because of the harm caused to people, wildlife and the environment when unneeded or expired medications are tossed in the trash or flushed down toilets. The disposal issue has drawn even more attention as children or thieves get their hands on narcotics and other medicines, as patients overdose after inadvertently mixing medications, and as wildlife specialists continue to document physical changes in wildlife, as a result of ingesting medications dissolved in rivers, streams and other water bodies.

This free, voluntary and confidential program is currently designed for older adults but will open up to all age groups in the near future. For a list of pharmacy sites and a full list of program partners call 1-866-637-9743, e-mail: info@SafeMedDisposal.com or visit www.SafeMedDisposal.com.

Center is Awarded Grant to Conduct Rural Kinship Services Research

The Center on Aging is pleased to announce the receipt of a grant award of \$16,000 from the Brookdale Foundation Relatives as Parents Program. This grant will allow the Center to undertake research in the area of rural kinship care services. The Center will lead a one year study on the unique challenges faced by rural kinship families and the innovative practice solutions that service providers in rural areas employ to support such families. Center on Aging staff and students will first conduct

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The Center on Aging is an interdisciplinary research center reporting to the Vice President for Research and associated with the University of Maine's School of Social Work and the College of Business, Public Policy, and Health. Our mission is to promote and facilitate activities on aging in the areas of education, research and evaluation, and community service, in order to maximize the quality of life of older citizens and their families in Maine and beyond.

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From the Director

Who would have guessed that an academic center on aging would be conferring on nearly a daily basis with law enforcement officials, environmentalists, and postal service professionals. Five years ago, the thought that the UMaine Center on Aging would have reason to work side by side with these individuals would have sounded far fetched. And yet, Center on Aging staff finds themselves doing just that. The responsibilities associated with administering the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-funded Safe Medicine Disposal for ME program have required in no uncertain terms that we redefine who our community partners are in planning new programs and conducting research. And the experience is proving to be both fascinating and extremely satisfying. Implementation of this project with our Maine Benzodiazepine Study Group partners has led to the impressive expansion in our network of organizational collaborators with whom we now work. Along the way it has become exceedingly clear to Center staff that ridding households of expired and unwanted prescription drugs is a contemporary aging issue of rapidly growing importance with far reaching social, health, environmental, and economic implications. Clearly we are not alone in discovering the crucial tie between aging and the environment. For example, the recently released issue of the Public Policy and Aging Report (Vol. 18, No. 2, Spring 2008) is devoted exclusively to this very topic.



Lenard W. Kaye

Indeed, consideration of aging in the context of the environment is quickly coming of age throughout the United States. I dare say that aging-related programs have emerged as one of the leading players in implementing prescription drug take-back programs both in Maine and elsewhere in the country as TRIADS, AARP offices, Area Agencies on Aging, and other geriatric-focused community groups and organizations take the initiative in making such programs a reality. In partnership with health care centers and law enforcement officials, the aging community can take pride in saying that it is a dominant force now mobilizing around this issue.

I would predict that preserving the environment can and will represent a natural focal point attracting baby boomers who are now seriously contemplating the kinds of volunteer and civic engagement activities that will strike their fancy as they begin to prepare to transition out of the workplace. We have had great success engaging RSVP volunteers in the Safe Medicine Disposal for ME program. Clearly the opportunity to serve as environmental stewards has resonated with these older adult volunteers. I cannot think of a better way in which to contribute one's valuable time and energy in the communities in which we live.

Partnerships and Programs.....

CENTER ON AGING FACULTY ASSOCIATE SANDY BUTLER RECEIVES GRANT TO STUDY HOME HEALTH CARE

Center on Aging Faculty Associate Sandy Butler, has received \$123,000



Dr. Sandy Butler

of funding from the National Institute on Aging to carry out a three-year project investigating factors influencing turnover and retention among home care

workers, with a particular focus on whether these factors differ between older (55 years of age and older) and younger workers. The funding mechanism, the Academic Research Enhancement Award, was created by the National Institute of Health to encourage training of students in health sciences research; to carry out that mission, this research will involve social work and nursing students in all stages of data collection and analysis.

This project joins two primary areas of interest for Dr. Butler: the financial security of women throughout their lives and the health and well-being of elders. Specifically the research will address a current crisis in our long-term care (LTC) system, namely maintaining an adequate number of workers to provide the daily care needed by millions of our nation's elders. Direct care workers tend to work for very low wages, often without benefits, and under difficult working conditions. Not surprisingly, there are high turnover rates for these positions and vacan-

cies are not always filled quickly. This phenomenon can result in compromised care for elders and increased direct costs for individual agencies and indirect costs for taxpayers supporting government programs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that in this first decade of the twenty-first century, 1.2 million additional direct care workers will be needed to both cover projected growth in LTC positions and replace departing workers. This increase in need is accompanied by a decrease in the pool of individuals from which the paraprofessional LTC workforce is generally drawn: women 25 to 55 years of age. One solution to this crisis could be to encourage older workers to enter and/or remain in the field.

This project will be an 18-month longitudinal study of Personal Care Attendants (PCAs)/Personal Support Specialists (PSSs) in several home care agencies in Maine. A mail survey of PCAs/PSSs will gather data on multiple factors potentially related to job tenure. A shorter survey will be sent to all participants either at the time they leave the agency or, if still employed, at the end of the study period. This second survey will be followed by a telephone interview to collect data on the factors leading workers to stay with or leave the agency. Statistical analysis will be used to examine the direct and indirect effects of age, employment factors, and job experi-

ence factors on predicting length of employment. Qualitative data analysis techniques will be used to analyze the narrative data from the telephone interviews. The study findings will have practical implications in terms of recruitment and retention of home care workers, particularly older workers. In addition to its primary goal of training students in health sciences research, this study ultimately aims to contribute to a reduction in the negative effects of worker turnover, such as compromised care of elders and increased costs for agencies and government health care programs. It also aims to increase the employment of older workers in the field of home care, thereby promoting their psychological, physical, financial and emotional well-being.

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Rural Research continued from Front Cover...

an assessment survey with rural services providers. The Center will then conduct interviews with key informants including researchers, practitioners, policy makers, advocates and others who work with rural caregivers. A literature review will also be conducted to gather information about existing research in the field. The final product will be a user friendly manual that will represent a collection of practice wisdom from stakeholders throughout the country. If you would like to participate and lend your expertise or share your experiences in working with rural caregivers, or for more information, contact Melissa Adle at 207-262-7931 or melissa.adle@umit.maine.edu.

RSVP VOLUNTEERS HELP IMPLEMENT MAILBACK DRUG RETURN PROGRAM



The “Safe Medicine Disposal for ME” program is proving to be a successful collaborative initiative that brings both the research and community service missions of the Center on Aging together on a project with statewide reach and national implications. CoA’s Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is working with the state’s four other RSVP programs to provide meaningful volunteer opportunities for older adults who are passionate about senior safety, community education, and environmental stewardship.

For the last year, RSVP volunteers from all parts of Maine have been serving on the project’s Community Advisory Board (CAB) and have been involved in many aspects of the project from planning to implementation. Monthly teleconferences and periodic in-person meetings are held allowing volunteers to be fully engaged in the progress of the project and to offer valuable input. RSVP volunteers have provided feedback on project materials including research surveys, project instruction booklets, evidence-based environmental fact sheets, volunteer training curriculum, and project marketing materials.

On April 10th, ten volunteers were trained to be the on-the-ground liaisons between the

research project staff and the larger community. These volunteers distributed pre-paid envelopes to participating pharmacies and educated pharmacy staff members about the project in the four counties that represent the pilot phase of the project – Aroostook, Cumberland, Kennebec, and Penobscot. The response thus far has been very promising with over 250 envelopes returned by consumers. Data collected in the pilot phase of the project will guide statewide availability in the fall of 2008.

RSVP members participating in the project are: Marilyn Cousins and Betty Rinehart (Aroostook); Barb Miller (York); Chris Longley and Barbara Payne (Oxford); Sue Davis and Alice White (Hancock); Nancy Hayward (Washington); Hank Lunn and Helen Marston (Knox); Barbara Nathanson (Waldo); and Paul and Nancy Matulis (Piscataquis). RSVP volunteer Marilyn Kitler (Hancock) coined the project name “Safe Medicine Disposal for ME.” Volunteers who are no longer active but have participated on the CAB in the past are: Kerry Kenney (Cumberland), Lucy Mignone (Kennebec) and Maryann Yannet (Cumberland). The participation of volunteers on this project has been extremely valuable and the enthusiasm and passion that project volunteers have for seeing that this project is a success has been encouraging.

2008 BAR HARBOR RURAL GERIATRIC CONFERENCE SUMMARY

It was sunny, beautiful, warm, and most of all educational! The 18th Annual Bar Harbor Rural Geriatric Conference was held on June 12-13 drawing a record attendance. This year’s conference was a joint effort by the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine, Maine’s DHHS, the Maine Gerontological Society, and Acadia Health Education Coalition, among others.

Attendees included a mix of social workers, nurses, administrators, adult protective staff and other interested stakeholders. On the first day of the conference, attendees were treated to a presentation from Susan Wehry, Director of Vermont’s Agency of Human Services, who spoke about depression in late life. Attendees were then invited to participate in two rounds of breakout sessions on topics that varied from Taijiquan for elders and their caregivers, long term care needs in Maine, to culture change in nursing homes.

The second day of the conference featured a presentation by Dr. Marie Bernard, Chair of the Reynolds Department of Geriatrics at the University of Oklahoma’s College of Medicine. The afternoon consisted of additional breakout sessions, again offering an engaging variety of topics and speakers.

Mark your calendars for next year’s conference: June 4-5, 2009, location to be determined.

RAPP OFFERS ONLINE PROGRAMS AND LEGAL SUMMIT FOR GRANDFAMILIES

The University of Maine Center on Aging Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) is preparing for two more years of education and support for grandfamilies throughout the state and across the county. RAPP received additional funding totaling \$10,000 through the Brookdale Foundation of New York to support grandparents raising grandchildren and other relative caregivers, youth living with relatives, and social service professionals working with grandfamilies.

On September 26, 2008, CoA will partner with Families and Children Together to offer an all day legal summit for grandfamilies and professionals. This program, Maine Summit for Grandfamilies: The Law, Kinship, and Children

will feature keynote speaker Gerard Wallace, Esq., director of the Grandparent support Project of the Government Law Center at Albany Law School. The event will feature a panel of grandparents and other relative caregivers speaking about their experience working with the legal system in addition to a panel of lawyers discussing current legal issues and responding to the concerns of grandfamilies. Throughout the day, there will be the opportunity for discussion among relative caregivers, lawyers, and other social service professionals.

Following the summit, the Center will kick off a series of online e-seminars for grandparents and relative caregivers. In collaboration with RAPP task force members and other professionals, CoA will continue to offer regular e-seminars to grandfamilies. Topics for caregivers will center on self-care and other issues related to caregiving. Basic computer, e-mail, and internet use training will be provided to grandparents across the

state interested in participating in the e-seminars. This training will provide all the skills necessary to take part in the seminars, as well as provide an introduction to technology that will help caregivers gain access to other information and resources through the internet.

Beginning early next year, CoA will host e-conversations for youth being raised by grandparents or other relatives, providing them with a safe outlet to discuss their experiences under the guidance of a trained facilitator. E-seminars will also be offered to caregiver support group leaders and other professionals working with grandparents raising grandchildren and other relative caregivers to help them better support grandfamilies. For more information contact Melissa Adle, Center on Aging Graduate Research Assistant at: 207-262-7931 or melissa.adle@umit.maine.edu.

SPOTLIGHT ON PRODUCTIVE AGING: PAUL AND NANCY MATULIS

By Angela Lyford

Paul and Nancy Matulis have lived in the Dover-Foxcroft area for the past 22 years. The couple has three adult children, two of which live in New York and one who is attending Law School in Portland, Maine. Nancy is a retired nurse, but fills her time with volunteer work. She is a part of the Piscataquis Triad, the American Council to the Blind and Community First. She still finds time to volunteer at her local YMCA. Nancy feels that social interaction in one's retirement years is important and sees volunteering as the ultimate way to do this. Both Paul and Nancy see that an "ability to become more active in the community comes with aging." Paul works for a program called CASH/EM (Creating Assets, Savings & Hope/Eastern Maine) where free tax preparation and asset building is the focus for low and moderate-income families. Paul and Nancy are both members of the Advisory Board for the Safe Drug Disposal for ME Program. Both are strong advocates for volunteerism and uphold the motto: "If you have time to give, doing positive things for the community feels good. Do it!"



Paul Matulis (left) orienting pharmacist Bill Miller to the mail-back program

HIV/AIDS: A NEED FOR SAFER SEX PRACTICES THROUGHOUT OUR LATER YEARS

BY AMANDA PRESCOTT

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) have been hot topics in the discussion of human sexuality for many years. There continues to be a need for further education for people of all ages on safer sex practices and healthcare resources to address the diagnosis and treatment of these diseases; however, the older adult population is one that is at particular risk for infection from these diseases. It is estimated that ten percent of all AIDS cases are people age 50 and older, with one quarter of these cases being people over age 60 (National Association on HIV Over 50, 2001). In a study documented by the National AIDS Manual (NAM), it was found that of people aged 60-79 who had died while in an elder care residential setting, 5% were found to have positive HIV antibodies although none of these people had a previous HIV infection and none died as a direct cause of HIV infection. NAM also reports that untreated, older HIV-positive individuals are twice as likely to die as their younger, untreated counterparts (Bernard, 2005).

The reasons for this age group being at particular risk for infection are varied. Many older adults have not been sensitized to the mass media surrounding sexually transmitted diseases in recent years as their younger counterparts. Substantial numbers of older adults have been in long term, monogamous relationships where the focus has not traditionally been on practicing safe sex methods. This may result in less knowledge of what practices are available to engage in safe sex when elders find themselves seeking new partners in their later years (Griffith, 2007).

There exists a great deal of stigma surrounding sexuality in ones' later years and this is certainly a factor inhibiting discussion of sexually transmitted diseases. Many older adults are less apt to be concerned about safe sex practices as they are past the age of child bearing and may not know they are at risk for contraction (Emlet & Poindexter, 2004). Diagnosis and treatment of these conditions is further delayed by a lack of communication between doctors and their older patients about the importance of safe sex practices. Many physicians are not asking, or are reluctant to ask, the right questions of their older adult patients that would allow for an accurate picture of sexual health to be disclosed (National Institute on Health, 2008). Children of older adults may also take a "don't ask, don't tell" stance when it comes to their parents' sexual activities. Compounding this is often the older person's reluctance to talk about their sexual practices and a lack of knowledge about sexually transmitted diseases and their symptoms.

It is imperative for the health of our older population that the stigma surrounding sexuality and personal practices be decreased. Healthcare professionals, case workers, families and friends all have a role in communicating with older adults about the risks of unprotected sex and taking new partners without talking about each other's sexual histories. Older adults also have a role in advocating for themselves and their right to a healthy, active sex life. It will only be with a reduction in the reluctance to talk about sex in later life that there will be a decrease in the number of older adults being diagnosed with HIV and AIDS.

References available upon request from Amanda Prescott: amanda.v.prescott@umit.maine.edu.

For those interested in exploring this topic further, please consider attending the upcoming HIV/AIDS special colloquium at the University of Maine on September 26th. See page 7 for more details.

Previews and Preludes.....

MARK YOUR CALENDAR! UPCOMING 2008 CoA EVENTS

A GREYING EPIDEMIC: HIV/AIDS AND OLDER ADULTS

SEPTEMBER 26 FROM 9:00AM-12:00PM AT THE BUCHANAN ALUMNI HOUSE, ORONO, ME

A special colloquium for professionals interested in exploring the impact of HIV and AIDS on our aging population. The event will feature Dr. Mark Brennan as a keynote presenter in addition to a panel of experts from the field. Free. Sponsored by the UMaine School of Social Work and the Center on Aging. RSVP to Robin (Sasha) Arnold at (207) 581-2398 or at robin.arnold@umit.maine.edu. More information will be posted online at: www.mainecenteronaging.org.

MAINE SUMMIT FOR GRANDFAMILIES: THE LAW, KINSHIP, AND CHILDREN

SEPTEMBER 26 FROM 8:30AM - 3:30PM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AUGUSTA, AUGUSTA, ME

This 3rd Maine Summit for Grandfamilies focuses on relatives stepping in to raise children. Participants will learn about current legal options for grandfamilies, their experiences in Maine courts, and ways to improve the legal process. Featured keynote: Gerard Wallace. Sponsored by Families and Children Together and the Center on Aging. For more information: contact Noreen Peters at 1-866-298-0896 or npeters@familiesandchildren.org.

RSVP RECOGNITION LUNCHEON

OCTOBER 22, 2008, JEFF'S CATERING, BREWER, ME

Each fall the UMaine Center on Aging RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) holds its annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon. Approximately 350 volunteers age 55 and older attend this event held at Jeff's Catering in Brewer. The event features a keynote speaker, meal, and entertainment along with public recognition of those volunteers who have served in their communities for 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years. For more information contact Paula Burnett at 207-262-7926 or paula.burnett@umit.maine.edu.

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON PHARMACEUTICALS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

NOVEMBER 10 & 11: 2008 AT THE WYNDHAM PORTLAND AIRPORT HOTEL, PORTLAND, ME

This conference is designed for health care professionals, policy makers, law enforcement, environmentalists, substance abuse professionals, and others concerned with the human and environmental impact of benzodiazepines and other prescription drugs on individuals, families, and communities. This conference will be the gathering place for disseminating the latest trend data available on prescription drug use and abuse and current disposal practices. For more information visit: www.mainebenzo.org/2008conference.htm.

FALL 2008 COURSE OFFERING: WOMEN AND AGING

400-LEVEL, 3 CREDIT, UNDERGRADUATE COURSE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

PEG CRUIKSHANK, INSTRUCTOR

Feminist Gerontology, starting in the 1990s, expanding in this decade, has much to offer students who want to learn about the physical, social, and cultural aspects of aging. This course gives a positive but realistic picture of your future. Topics to be covered include: ageism, the social construction of aging, critical gerontology, humanities and aging, and critiques of aging research. Can you identify Maggie Kuhn, Gloria Wade-Gayles, Barbara Macdonald, and Martha Holstein? If not, this course might be for you. For more information please contact Peg Cruikshank by e-mail at: peg.cruikshank@umit.maine.edu.



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PICTURES FROM THE BAR HARBOR RURAL GERIATRIC CONFERENCE JUNE 12-13, 2008



Conference attendees enjoyed networking opportunities and beautiful views of the Bar Harbor coastline.



Audience members discussing a morning presentation during the opening session of the conference



Drs. Susan Wehry, Geriatric Psychiatrist, (left) and Marilyn Gugliucci, Maine Gerontological Society Vice President, (right) at the rural geriatric conference.